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ABSTRACT

As the United States school population becomes more linguistically and culturally diverse, teachers are challenged to provide full access, equality of instruction, and appropriate learning environments to all students. It is estimated that more than 20 percent of the 45 million school-age children live in households in which languages other than English are spoken; 6 million are from Spanish speaking households. At the same time, only 12 percent of public school teachers and administrators are minorities and that number is expected to decrease; only 18 percent of elementary and 13 percent of secondary teachers have training to work with minority students with limited English proficiency. One key approach to improving the low achievement of linguistically and culturally diverse students is to emphasize training new teachers in strategies that focus on improving cognitive processes used in critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making. Also, teachers need to integrate students' language strengths in the teaching learning process, use standardized and authentic assessment information for better teaching and learning, and implement educational reforms in schools with low educational resources and many academically at-risk students. Knowledge of culturally diverse students will generate appropriate attitudes and school practices and instruction that addresses the culturally diverse students' developmental needs and learning styles. (Contains 26 references.) (ND)

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PREPARING ALL CLASSROOM TEACHERS TO EDUCATE A LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL POPULATION

by

Angela Carrasquillo

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
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PREPARING ALL CLASSROOM TEACHERS TO EDUCATE A LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL POPULATION

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Teachers are the most powerful influence on students' behavior and learning. Teachers' attitudes, expectations, behaviors, and actions affect students academic development and achievement. In an effort to improve the education of all students, and to better understand the teaching and learning process, educational researchers are continuously investigating the challenges teachers face in their important role of teaching and learning. Higher standards for student achievement challenges educators to reflect on what is taught, and how it is taught. Schools are trying new forms of assessment, are revising curricula and implementing new methodologies to ensure that teachers produce highly trained learners. With the continuous increase in cultural diversity among the student population in the United States, teacher's role is viewed not as transmitters of a fixed body of knowledge but facilitators of learning that draws on the varied and rich resources of the classroom community (Gorton & Brown, 1993, Trueba, 1989)). Greater emphasis is being placed on individual schools to assure that their teachers are trained to impart an effective delivery of instruction to all students, including the linguistic, and culturally diverse student population (Brophy, 1979, Garcia, 1993, Ramirez, 1992, Wittrock, 1987). Projected increases in school enrollment over the next twenty years will further the demand for highly qualified teachers and school leaders who understand diverse students' characteristics and learning strengths.

The changing school population across the nation puts additional demands on teachers to provide full access, equality of instruction and appropriate learning environments for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Specifically, in working with this diverse student population, teachers are faced with the following challenges: (a) how to improve the low academic achievement of linguistically and culturally diverse students, (b) how to integrate students' diverse language and cultural characteristics and strengths in the teaching/learning process, (c) how to use standardized and authentic assessment information for better teaching and more students' learning, and (d) how to implement reforms in teaching in schools where there are scarcity of educational resources and many students who are academically at risk. Addressing these challenges may contribute to the way in which teachers will be equipped, both individually and collectively, to play and develop and active role in defining the enterprise of education and

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to meet the needs of all the students in their classrooms. These challenges are the focus of this paper.

A Demographic Overview

The differential growth on the composition of the school-age population has challenged teacher educators to prepare all classroom teachers to meet all students' unique learning, cognitive and linguistic characteristics. Of the estimated 45 million school- age children and youth in the United States, about 9.9 million, or more than one in five, live in households in which languages other than English are spoken and nearly 6 million are from Spanish speaking households (Waggoner, 1994; 1991). Spanish language minority children and youth comprised 13% of the school population in 1990. Other language minority school students accounted for 9% of the school population. It is projected that while the immigrant population grows, the Anglo/white population decreases. The Anglo population (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe) would slowly grow from 191 million in 1992 to 208 million in 2029, then slowly decline in 2050. The percentage of the white population in 1992 was about 75 , it will be 72% in 2000, 68% in 2010, 60% in 2030 and 50% in 2050 (United States Bureau of the Census, 1992).

The following table summarizes the United States population projections.

Table 1: Percent Distribution of the United States Population

Ethnic Group	**1990**	**2000**	**2030**	**2050**
White	75.7	71.6	60.2	52.7
African Amer.	11.8	12.3	13.8	15.0
Hispanic	9.0	11.1	17.2	21.1
Asian	2.8	4.2	7.9	10.1
Amer. Indian	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.1

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, 1992

By the year 2000, the population of the United States will show the following characteristics: (a) a big decrease in the White/Anglo population, (b) about 13 percent of the population will be African American, (c) Eleven percent will be Hispanic, (d) five percent of the population will be Asian, and (e) almost 1 percent of the population will be Native American. By the year 2050 the United States population will be: 72% White/Anglo, 16% African American, 21% Hispanic, 11 percent Asian and 1 percent Native American.

The elementary and secondary school population is constantly increasing. In 1990, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians made up 32 percent of the total public school enrollment in the nation, and 33 of the largest school districts had an enrollment of over 50 percent ethnic-and language minority students (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993). The elementary school population (ages 5 to 13) will increase by more than 4 million during the 1990's to over 36 million by the year 2000. The high school population (ages 14 to 17) will increase from 13.4 million in 1991 to 15.7 million in the year 2000 and 16.9 million in 2010 (United States Bureau of the Census, 1992). Language minority school students live in every state of the nation. In 1990, the school age language minority population ranged from 2.5 million in California to 9,000 in Vermont. There were 1.4 million language minority children and youth in Texas and 972,000 in New York (Waggoner, 1994). There were five other states with at least a quarter million language minority children and youth in 1990: Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Arizona, and Pennsylvania. Language minority school agrees constituted 39% in Texas, 36% in Hawaii, and about 33% in New York. Our schools are rapidly becoming more diverse. By the year 2000, 40% of our nation 's school age youth are expected to be persons of color (Zeichner, 1992). Therefore, educators are challenged to educate a higher percentage of students, less homogeneous, ethnically and linguistically more diverse, that will require a different approach to learning and teaching.

It has been hypothesized that linguistically and culturally diverse students may be better served by educators, especially teachers, from the students same ethnic and culturally background since teachers bring to the teaching process their knowledge and skills, their learning and teaching styles, and their personal characteristics. In other words, what teachers think about teaching determine what they do when they teach. But, one of the major challenges facing schools of the twenty-first century is how to address the incongruency between increasing minority student populations and low numbers of minority teachers. The National Center for Education Statistics reported in 1993 that only 12% of public school teachers and administrators were minorities and that percentage was expected to decrease. In addition, The National Education Goals Report (1995) indicated that: (a) only 18% of elementary teachers and 13% of secondary teachers reported in 1994 that they had received English as a second language training or other training to teach language minority limited English proficient students, (b) among secondary teachers, who report teaching limited English proficient (LEP) students, only about half reported having been trained to teach them. Therefore, all educators are challenged to find ways to better educate the increasing number of linguistically and culturally diverse population.

How to Improve the Low Academic Achievement of Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students

A major challenge confronting United States educators is the low academic achievement of cultural and language minority students (even though some gains have been reported). No matter what criterion is used (grades, tests scores, dropout rates, college acceptance rates), linguistically and culturally diverse students in general do not perform as well as their majority group counterparts in school (Council of Chief State Officers, 1990; National Center for Educational Statitics, 1993; National Educational Goals Panel, 1995). With regard to schooling, high school completion rates for linguistically and culturally diverse students are low. For example, data for 1990 indicated that Hispanic students rate for high school completion in all age groups was only 60 percent (Waggonner, 1991) while the completion rate for Whites was over 80 percent for all age groups. School failure persists among a disproportionate number of language-minority students. With the exception of some Asian groups (especially Chinese, Koreans and Japanese) a disproportionate number of linguistically and culturally diverse students do not reach acceptable achievement levels in English literacy, reading, mathematics, or science. For example, Hispanics have the lowest levels of educational attainment of any major population group. Only about half of Hispanic adults are high school graduates. Less than one in 10 Hispanics graduates from college (Carrasquillo, 1991). Many academic surveys of academic achievement conclude that there exist achievement disparities among students from differing family, socioeconomic, ethnic and language backgrounds and that these students are at risk of academic failure.

Recent analysis have pointed toward institutional, school structures reforms and resources that define and contribute to students' failure. Programmatic remedies and emphasis continue to focus on remedying students' individual skills or deficits. For example, one reason for the culturally diverse students' low academic performance is that their education is not part of a large mission plan on the part of the educational system. Many of these students tend to be enrolled in educational "tracks" which prepare them for neither college or stable employment. Large numbers of these students continue to receive instruction that is substandard to what mainstream student English speakers receive. In many instances, these students are not expected to meet the same high standards as "mainstream" children. For example, a high percentage of Hispanic youth are in non-academic tracks which do not offer the required courses, especially in mathematics and science to enter college. In addition, there is no coordination among programs designed for students who need special educational services. For example, federal programs such as

Bilingual Education, Title I, and Migrant Education offered fragmented services to students, thus their academic needs are only partially met.

How can educators contribute to improve language minority students performance? Because of linguistic, cultural and cognitive students' characteristics, teachers need a different type of teachers preparation to effectively deliver instruction. One recommendation is that teachers preparation and in -service training needs to move toward cognitive training as an important area in the knowledge base of teacher education. Teachers need to concentrate on learning strategies area which focuses on improvement of the cognitive processes used in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. These strategies teach students how to think and act when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task. These strategies also serve as a mediating link between the application of basic skills to the mastery of content material. But teachers need training in challenging students who have or do not have proficiency in the English language, especially in reading and writing. In addition, educators need to find ways to communicate to each child that his/her special ability /quality/language/culture is understood, and valued. This type of teaching attitude and preparation is not easy to be developed because educators are influenced by their personal experiences, values, beliefs, prejudices, apprehension and expectations (Faltis; Paley, 1979; Trueba).

How to Integrate Students' Language Strengths in the Teaching Learning Process

Students bring to the educational setting knowledge, skills, and personal (linguistic, cultural, cognitive) characteristics which can help educators to determine students goals, and instructional program structure which can operate as baselines. Students' language may influence their chances for success in the classroom. For some children, this mother tongue may be English, or another language or a combination of both, in many instances with limitations. Lack of language proficiency in English and/or in the student's native language, may affect students' ability to learn, especially if the academic subjects' content and skills are taught in the students' weak language. Today, despite the existence of bilingual education and English as a second language programs developed for language minority students and even in the face of widespread linguistic heterogeneity in schools, English continues to be viewed as the only valid medium of instruction (Carrasquillo, 1995; United States General Accounting Office, 1994). The fallacy is that what works for mainstream students will work for all groups especially with respect to teaching strategies and students learning strategies. An extension of this assumption is the treatment of English and literacy as if they were synonymous. Students

can be English speakers without demonstrating proficiency in English literacy. But if students are proficient in another language, they can be provided with substantial amounts of primary language instruction without impeding their acquisition of English language and reading skills. Assessment of English language proficiency is important for determining the appropriate level of English language assistance. It is necessary to assess students frequently so that activities involving the appropriate degree of language difficulty are included in the planning and delivery of instruction.

Unfortunately, teachers are not compelled to change their teaching strategies to meet the needs of linguistically diverse students. Erroneously, teachers get the notion that the need to adapt is incumbent on the students, not on the teachers. Second, is the idea that if students are not performing satisfactorily is the students' fault, and not that of the curriculum, the instruction, or the lack of inclusion of the students strengths in the teaching and learning process. Teachers, in their delivery of instruction tend to treat minority students as exceptions to the norm, as students who should be assimilated into the dominant group, rather than accommodated according to their own needs. Failure to address the needs of minority students is not due to a conscious omission but to an established tradition of ignoring differences among learners, a practice supported by designing educational programs and school policies primarily for native English speaking and literate students.

How to Use Standardized and Authentic Assessment Information for Better Teaching and Students' Learning

There are several reasons to assess students' learning in the classroom: to place students in classes, to measure students' progress and achievement, to guide and improve instruction, and to diagnose and evaluate students' knowledge on a topic before it is taught. The assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse students is necessary to gain knowledge as to their level of school achievement, English language proficiency level, another language strength, and learning/cognitive styles. However, if these students are not appropriately assessed, no one can really be held accountable for what these students know and what they can do in the different subject areas, and in their overall educational performance. Linguistically and culturally diverse students' assessment should begin as soon as they arrive in school; written records should begin to be created in the form of cumulative files, observation notes, anecdotal information, tests scores, and grades. It is also recommended that a portfolio of the students' work be immediately organized. This is kept in school and provides information on the student's progress toward mastery of important content knowledge, thinking skills, language as well as the development of reading and writing proficiency. Once assessment information has begun to be compiled,

the next necessary step is to use that information for instructional purposes. Also, if linguistically and culturally diverse students are instructed in their native language, they should be assessed and evaluated in that language. The native language assessment should parallel content assessment and performance standards in English (Stanford Working Group, 1994). But this assessment has to be appropriate to measure the academic, linguistic, and cognitive progress of these students. Identifying these areas in individual students' profiles can provide a sound basis for making instructional decisions about students. Instruction must also be evaluated on an ongoing basis to determine whether there are sufficient opportunities for students to practice skills or content to reach desired levels of independent performance. Students are sometimes allowed to engage in independent practice before they have demonstrated adequate understanding of the processes and content involved. It is important to remember that independent functioning requires mastery of material at the cognitive level of the students.

Current assessment instruments in English are inappropriate because they actually assess both content concepts and language ability, particularly reading comprehension and writing (Council of Chief State School Officers. (1992; Stanford Working Group, 1994). Because language and content are intricately intertwined, it is difficult to isolate one feature from the other in the assessment process. Thus, educators may not be sure whether students are simply unable to demonstrate knowledge because of a language barrier or whether, indeed, the student does not know the process, the skills, or the content material assessed. Often, these assessments simply become measures of students' English language proficiency rather than measures of content knowledge. One of my recommendations is for states to develop performance objective assessments that are appropriate for these students and are based on students' actual educational experiences. The development of appropriate mechanisms to assess whether schools are meeting State performance goals is especially critical for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

The literature on the assessment of language minority students has identified some of the problems in using current standardized measurements to identify the linguistic, cognitive and academic abilities of students (Canales, 1990; DeGeorge, 1988). It has been said that these standardized tests have limited the access of language minority students to more rigorous study at all educational levels, and have prevented students from entering professional schools. They are also used to assign disproportionately large numbers of minority students to special education programs for the mentally retarded, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed. Mercer, back in 1979 said that these tests are based on an Anglo-conformity model of appraisal because in making inferences about children's "intelligence" or "aptitudes", present procedures presume that America is a culturally

homogeneous society in which all children are being socialized into essentially the same Anglo tradition. Anyone who cannot pass the appropriate test certainly cannot be qualified to move onto further study. In fact, such testing limits the access of many culturally and linguistically diverse students to study the career of their choice. Therefore, it is necessary to provide assessment for instructional purposes selecting and using linguistically and culturally appropriate assessment measures designed to provide information and guidance to teachers, parents and students on the progress being made by individual students in meeting the school instructional objectives. Educators must be careful not to label students intellectually inferior because they score poorly on standardized tests. These scores too often influence the teacher's expectations for the academic performance of students in the classroom (Canales, 1990; DeGeorge, 1988). Proper assessment must include the use of multiple forms of assessment (portfolio, journals, teachers evaluations, self evaluations , criterion referenced tests, and standardized tests). Such assessments should be in the language and form most likely to yield accurate and reliable information on what language minority students know and can do. This assessment also determines when students are considered sufficiently fluent to succeed in all-English classrooms.

How do Implement Educational Reforms in Schools with Low Educational Resources and Many Students Academically at Risk

Educational reforms may press teachers to move on to too many new areas of the learning and teaching process at the same time. Educational teaching reforms in subject matter standards, curriculum content, assessment, and pedagogy increasingly aspire toward more and better students outcomes. Among current educational reforms, one can list mathematics and social studies standards, integrated science curricula, literature based approach to language arts, natural assessment, and cooperative learning. Educational reforms demand a greater facility among teachers for integrating subject content and for organizing students' opportunities to learn. They represent on the whole, a substantial departure from teachers' prior experience, established beliefs, and present practice. They assume that these teachers have rarely experienced these educational innovations and they need to be involved in professional development activities in order to become more effective in the delivery of instruction to get better students' outcomes. Lord's (1991) vision of teachers professional development includes three main areas: (a) teachers' knowledge of academic content, instruction and students learning, (b) teaches access to a broader network of professional relationships, and (c) teachers' leadership in their own professional development. Professional development offers teachers meaningful intellectual, social, and emotional engagement with ideas, with materials, and with

colleagues and experts in the field. It places classroom practice in the larger contexts of school practice and the educational careers of students. It is grounded in a big-picture perspective on the purposes and practices of schooling, providing teachers a means for seeing and acting upon the connections among students 'experiences, teachers classroom practice, and school wide structures and cultures. Teachers need to actively involved themselves in developing their own theories of teaching, in understanding the nature of teacher decision making, and in developing strategies for critical self-awareness, and evaluation of students. But, well -meaning teachers have lost sight of the fact that mere implementation of these educational reforms does not necessarily translate into authentic learning experiences for students.

Classrooms that have linguistically and culturally diverse students reflect a broader variety of linguistic and cultural differences. Teachers have to be aware of these linguistic and cultural differences and plan accordingly to provide instructional experiences that take into consideration students' linguistic levels and cultures (Faltis, 1993). Research (Carrasquillo, 1995; Faltis, 1993; Garcia, 1993; Ramirez, 1992; Witrock, 1987) suggests that effective instructional practices for teaching language minority students would require educators to be knowledgeable about the principles of second language acquisition, students' cultural backgrounds, cognitive and learning styles and experiences to establish different and varied instructional classroom strategies to meet the growing needs of the linguistically and culturally diverse school population. For example, research indicates that utilizing a variety of interactive teachers' methods allow teachers to better instruct students with varying learning/cognitive styles, and individual differences thereby engaging all students in learning. In addition students need to be provided with a first class curriculum. What are the characteristics of a first class curriculum?

1. It provides a multicultural curriculum that is integrated throughout the curriculum, rather than taught in isolated, fragmented units on special occasions. The concept of culture is seen in a continuum, with people demonstrating characteristics ranging from traditional roles to more contemporary ones. The curriculum thus includes content that looks at the customs, folklore, values, and language of the diversity of people and cultures that make up the United States, and not only those groups represented in the classroom.

2. It provides rich opportunities for literacy development (thinking, discourse, reading, and writing) across the curriculum. It involves comprehension (an active and goal oriented construction of coherent mental representation based on newly acquired information and prior knowledge), critical thinking, problem solving, and writing skills development.

3. It draws on the thinking process to become the content of curriculum. Development of the intellect, learning to learn, decision making, creativity and problem solving become the subject matter of instruction. The multicultural content selected becomes a vehicle to practice the thinking processes and skills.

4. It involves students in learning experiences or activities related to their aspirations and problems. The provision of learning experiences are actually activities that may be written into the curriculum plan and which offer opportunities for students to reach the objectives specified . Tyler (1992) asserted that learning experiences must be selected so that students have sufficient opportunity to experience and complete the tasks required of them successfully. He also asserted that learning experiences must enable students to gain satisfaction from exhibiting particular kinds of behavior.

5. It emphasizes problem-situated learning. Real world problems provide authentic content for thinking; these problems require judgment and thinking, organizing, and collaboration. As the personal experiences of students, these problems may not have good solutions or may not lend themselves to more than one solution, but they are worth thinking about and exploring. They also typically involve more than one content area, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of learning in the real world.

Conclusion

Literature reviewed in this paper suggests that teachers need training in the development of modifications in the classroom to deliver instruction to a diverse student population. Demographic changes in the United States have brought educational and social issues related to language and academic learning. Educators across the nation are facing the challenge of educating students with whom they cannot easily communicate because of language and cultural differences. In addition, culturally and linguistically diverse students bring cultural, cognitive and linguistic characteristics to school that require educators' immediate attention. Teachers need to be aware that cultural, linguistic, cognitive factors, and socialization practices influence cognitive and affective preferences and are manifested in incentives and motivation, in interpersonal relationships, and patterns of intellectual abilities. Students' cultural identity, as well as their knowledge of their first language are part of the academic foundation of their learning process. Because these students represent many diverse ethnic groups and bring to school the richness of many languages, educators need to assess their strengths and weaknesses in a variety of ways.

Knowledge of culturally diverse students will generate appropriate attitudes and school practices to plan and implement instruction which addresses the culturally diverse students' developmental needs and learning styles. Therefore, teachers set expectations for

all students, without watering down the curriculum, but significantly altering the classroom organization and teaching techniques so that those exemptions could be reached by both the mainstream and minority students.

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